

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1 Name of Property

historic name Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South

other names/site number Centenary United Methodist Church

2 Location

street & number 55 Plaza Square [n/a] not for publication

city or town St. Louis [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county City of St. Louis code 510 zip code 63103

3 State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In
my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be
considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO

December 1996
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4 National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date

[] entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet [].

[] determined eligible for the
National Register

See continuation sheet [].

[] determined not eligible for the
National Register.

[] removed from the
National Register

[] other, explain

See continuation sheet [].

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	0	0
		0	0
		0	0
		1	0

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

RELIGION/religious facility
RELIGION/church school

Current Functions

RELIGION/religious facility
RELIGION/church school

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Gothic Revival

Materials

foundation limestone
walls limestone
brick
roof slate
other stucco
copper

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8 Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

☒ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

1869-70

Significant Dates

1869-70

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Dixon, Thomas/Legg, Jerome B.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9 Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☐ Federal Agency

☐ Local Government

☐ University

☒ Other:

Name of repository: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., 917 Locust St., St. Louis, MO 63101

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone Easting Northing
15 743440 4279240

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary M. Stiritz

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

date 10/04/96

street & number 917 Locust, 7th Floor

telephone 314/421-6474

city or town St. Louis

state MO

zip code 63101-1413

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Centenary United Methodist Church Board of Trustees

street & number 55 Plaza Square

telephone 314/421-3136

city or town St. Louis

state MO

zip code 63103

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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Section 7 Page 1

Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South
City of St. Louis, MO

Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South is located on Pine Street between 16th and 17th Streets (also known as 55 Plaza Square) in the western part of downtown St. Louis, Missouri. Constructed in 1869-70 under the supervision of St. Louis architect Jerome B. Legg to designs of Baltimore architect Thomas Dixon, the Gothic Revival limestone building consists of a two-story church and adjoining three-story office/service building. In 1924, this original building was enlarged to the west with a three-story brick and stone addition designed by St. Louis architects Mauran, Russell & Crowell. Situated between Market and Olive Streets, two main business thoroughfares, the church is two blocks from St. Louis Union Station. Centenary's neighborhood, much of which was razed during urban renewal projects in the 1950s, today consists mainly of high-rise apartment buildings, with another church and older commercial buildings nearby. Parking lots and green spaces immediately adjoining the church to the north and across Pine to the southeast keep the much taller modern buildings from crowding in, allowing views of its magnificent steeple. The exterior of the building has received only minor alterations; the interior of the church proper remains in near-original condition, excellently maintained.

The church is constructed of rock-faced North St. Louis gray limestone and trimmed with buff smooth-faced De Soto, Missouri limestone. The church proper features a steeply-pitched front-gabled slate roof; the adjoining office/service building employs a gabled slate roof. The 60 by 80 foot auditorium or sanctuary is elevated above street level and reached by interior stairs; it rests on a high basement level which originally housed the Sunday school. The auditorium is articulated with five pairs of Gothic lancet windows plus a single lancet at the east end, while the street level windows of the former Sunday school employ flat linteled windows. Stone buttresses mark the exterior bay divisions. In 1912, the north side of the Sunday school was enlarged with a small one-story brick addition below the auditorium; it has small windows (almost at the roof line) and a center door.

Fronting on North 16th Street (now vacated), the church's primary (east) facade features a large Gothic traceried window in the gable; the window is framed above by a stone relieving arch and rests on a buff limestone beltcourse. Three pointed-arched doorways set within triangular pediments serve as the principal entrances; subordinate doors are located in the flanking tall tower at the south corner and in the smaller turret at the north corner of the facade. Buttressing sets off both the south tower (with asphalt shingled octagonal 200' steeple) and the gable-roofed north turret; lancet and round windows articulate the tower and turret. (Photo #1)

Extending from the rear (west elevation) of the church proper is an 1869 church office wing. (Photo #2) Constructed of rock-faced North St. Louis limestone matching the church, this wing also features De Soto, Missouri limestone used as trim. The gabled roof is slate. At the juncture of the wing and the church, a square turret rises four stories, the top story featuring lancet openings having wooden louvers with trefoil cutouts. De Soto stone pendant arches accent the turret at the fourth story and a small, Gothic-arched door is at its base. Next to the turret bay is the larger, primary entrance to the wing, featuring a large Gothic arch; windows in the two stories above this doorway have flat lintels with U-shaped De Soto smooth-faced stone hood molding. West of the doorway is a projecting two-bay pavilion topped by a front-gabled, single bay fourth story. Windows in this pavilion have ogee arches. The final, single bay of the wing features linteled windows at the first and third stories and a segmental stone arch at the second. All windows in this wing are double-hung wood sash.

In 1924, St. Louis architects Mauran, Russell & Crowell were hired to make some improvements to the building, taking care to match original materials on the primary (south) elevation. On the exterior of the

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Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South
City of St. Louis, MO

original wing, they made the original door (then the westernmost bay) into a window and replaced two windows next to the turret with the large Gothic-arched doorway now used as the primary side entrance. Expert stonemasonry made these changes invisible. A three-story addition was attached to the west end of the original wing; it projects all the way to the sidewalk on the south side and to the alley on the west. (Photo #3) This four-bay, flat-roofed addition was also executed in rock-faced limestone; double-hung wood sash windows have smooth-faced limestone lintels and sills. The west elevation is stuccoed and has only two small windows at the top story. A lightwell separates this office addition from the gymnasium that adjoins the northwest corner of the church. Also flat-roofed and three stories high, this portion was constructed of painted brick (Photo #4, right). Extending approximately 25' north of the north wall of the church, this portion of the 1924 work has multipane, industrial-style windows. Along the north wall of the church, a low, one-story, 25'-wide addition fills in the gap between the turret at the northeast corner of the church and the projecting gymnasium addition at the northwest corner. This flat-roofed, painted brick addition houses the church kitchen; its low height prevents it from obscuring the lancet stained-glass windows of the church auditorium (Photo #4, left).

The auditorium of Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South, features Gothic, black walnut and yellow pine panelled galleries on three sides. A showcase of wood craftsmanship, the auditorium exhibits expert craftsmanship in the black walnut and oak ceiling and mostly black walnut wainscoting, pews, pulpit and chancel, all in extremely good condition. It is illuminated from both sides by paired, two-story lancet windows featuring nonfigural opalescent leaded glass in shades of cream and amber with green borders, installed in 1900.

Both the exterior and the interior of the church have been extremely well maintained and retain a high degree of integrity.

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Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South
City of St. Louis, MO

Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 55 Plaza Square, St. Louis, is significant under Criterion C as a noteworthy example of the ecclesiastical work of Thomas Dixon, a prominent Baltimore architect. Designed in 1869, Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is also a significant early example of the Gothic Revival style in St. Louis; it is distinguished from a small group of other early Gothic churches by its well-preserved auditorium-plan interior exhibiting fine craftsmanship in wood. The 1924 education/service building addition by St. Louis architects Mauran, Russell & Crowell maintains the scale, materials and detailing of the original church building.

When the Gothic Revival style made its first St. Louis appearance in Christ Episcopal Church in 1839 (demolished), the Classical Revival still dominated St. Louis church design. In 1842, Centenary Methodist Episcopal, South, built its first church, only a block away from Christ Episcopal, in a Neoclassical style. However, as new residential sectors opened in the next western tier of urban settlement in the central corridor, Gothic steadily gained acceptance for churches. During the 1850s and 1860s St. Louis gained an outstanding group of Gothic style churches designed by leading east coast and local architects principally for Protestant congregations. A recent comprehensive survey of St. Louis churches¹ revealed that only four churches from this early phase still stand: 1859/1910 Christ Church Episcopal by Leopold Eidlitz (National Historic Landmark); 1867/1889 Holy Cross Lutheran Church, a more modest design by Cleveland architect Charles Giese; 1867/1893 St. Alphonsus Roman Catholic Church by Rev. Louis Dold with architect Thomas Walsh of St. Louis; and 1869 Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South, by Thomas Dixon. From the following 1870s decade, only three additional Gothic style churches survive that are comparable in size and quality to the earlier group.

In contrast to the cruciform or basilican longitudinal plans of the comparative church group, Centenary Methodist Episcopal, South, features a well-developed centralized auditorium plan, the earliest and one of the best examples of the plan type remaining in the city. Characteristically, Centenary's auditorium was designed "so as to bring the preacher as near as possible to his audience,"² underscoring the Methodist emphasis of preaching rather than liturgy. The plan followed principles of theater design which sought optimum conditions for hearing and viewing. To this end, Centenary's floor sloped approximately 18 inches toward the pulpit and the organ/choir space which were elevated on a tiered platform. Both the wrap-around three-sided balcony or gallery and the main floor pews (which were angled fan-shape) were "so arranged as to place all the auditors in the same range, as near as may be, at equal distances from the pulpit."³

The interior finishing of the auditorium is a showcase of fine wood craftsmanship. The exposed wood ceiling features a background of oak transversed by black walnut ribs. Pews are solid black walnut; the balcony is enclosed by black walnut Gothic paneling with yellow pine insets. The chancel railing also employs black walnut trimmed with yellow pine moldings. Original liturgical furniture includes a set of

¹"The St. Louis Church Survey," funded by matching grants from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., 1990-1995.

²St. Louis Christian Advocate, June 14, 1871.

³St. Louis Christian Advocate, June 14, 1871.

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Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South
City of St. Louis, MO

five Gothic Revival style chairs. The filigree Gothic organ casework dates to 1931 when the new Kilgen organ was installed. New, nonfigural opalescent amber leaded art glass windows were installed throughout the auditorium in 1900.

The selection of Baltimore architect Thomas Dixon (1819 - 1886) no doubt was influenced by members of Centenary's building committee who claimed Maryland and Delaware backgrounds.⁴ An experienced church designer, Dixon had already completed prestigious church commissions in both Middle Atlantic states by the time he drew up plans for Centenary in St. Louis. Although a native of Wilmington, Delaware, Dixon was practicing architecture in Baltimore as early as 1849 when he designed the Second Presbyterian church there. Dixon's 1867 design for Grace Methodist church in Wilmington (closely related to that of Centenary) made a strong impression on 19th century Wilmingtonians who viewed it as a significant benchmark of civic achievement.⁵ Dixon again employed Grace's and Centenary's successful facade composition on a third Methodist church, this time in Baltimore at Mr. Vernon Place Methodist Church (1870-72) (listed in the National Register of Historic Places). In addition to some twenty churches, a partial list of Dixon's projects includes the Baltimore County Courthouse and Jail buildings (1854), the Baltimore City Jail (1855-59), model schools for Baltimore County (1857-59), Frederick County Courthouse (1862), Wilmington Masonic Hall and Theater (1871), hotels, commercial buildings and residences.⁶

Dixon's design for Centenary also included an adjoining office/service building which fronts along Pine Street. The three-story Gothic Revival building repeats materials of the church proper: rock-faced St. Louis limestone with contrasting trim of smooth-faced De Soto, Missouri limestone. In 1924, the interior plan of this building was altered and updated to meet 20th century requirements. When St. Louis architects Mauran, Russell & Crowell drew up plans for these interior modifications, they also designed a three story addition that communicated with the original building. The primary Pine Street (south) elevation of the addition carefully echoes the materials and design elements of Dixon's building.

When Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in 1839 it was the second Methodist church established in St. Louis. The name of the church commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of John Wesley's founding of Methodism, an event which was celebrated worldwide in 1839. Many prominent citizens made up the prosperous new congregation. When commercial development encroached on the site of the first church at Broadway (5th Street) and Pine, Centenary followed the trend of westward migration from the Mississippi riverfront and built the new Gothic church at 16th and Pine Streets.

⁴Three members of the five man building committee came from Delaware or Maryland. Leading member Truett Polk (a Missouri Governor and U.S. Senator in the 1850s) was born in Sussex County, Delaware and worked in the law office of Delaware Attorney General James Rogers before coming to St. Louis. Both John Hogan and John Kennard grew up in Baltimore. Rev. J.H. Linn, the first regular pastor as Centenary's first church at 5th and Pine, came from Baltimore to serve as pastor in Centenary's new Gothic church at 16th and Pine. Virginia born Linn began his ministry in 1836 in the Baltimore Conference; he served four years in Maryland.

⁵For a discussion of Grace Methodist and the Wilmington context, see Carol E. Hoffecker, "Church Gothic: A Case Study of Revival Architecture in Wilmington, Delaware," *Winterthur Portfolio* 8 (1973): 223-228.

⁶Peter E. Kurtze, comp., "Biographical files and project list of architect Thomas Dixon," Maryland Historical Trust, Office of Research, Survey and Registration, Crownsville, Maryland, 1996.

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Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South
City of St. Louis, MO

By the turn of the century, however, most Protestant churches had abandoned downtown St. Louis for newer neighborhoods further west. Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Christ Episcopal remained the only two Protestant churches in a 300 block area where 25 years earlier fifteen such churches served the city.⁷ Centenary's long term commitment (made in 1900) to remain in the city despite demographic changes was renewed in 1924 by their \$150,000.00 investment in the rehabilitation of the old office/service building and construction of the three-story addition. At that time many of the congregation's 3000 members were unable to support the church financially. The neighborhood continued to change; decline was inevitable. Clearance for the Plaza Square Apartments in the 1950s isolated Centenary. Today, the residents of those apartments provide the nucleus for a growing church that once more attracts members from throughout the region.

⁷William Hyde and Howard L. Conard, eds., *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis* (New York: The Southern History Co., 1899), p. 1472.

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Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South
City of St. Louis, MO

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Hoffecker, Carol E. "Church Gothic: A Case Study of Revival Architecture in Wilmington, Delaware." Winterthur Portfolio 8 (1973) pp. 215-231.

Hyde, William and Howard L. Conard, eds. Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis. New York: The Southern History Co., 1899.

Kurtze, Peter E., comp. "Biographical files and project list of architect Thomas Dixon," 1996. Maryland Historical Trust, Office of Research, Survey and Registration, Crownsville, Maryland.

St. Louis Christian Advocate. June 14, 1871.

"St. Louis Church Survey," 1990-95. Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Department. Jefferson City, Missouri.

Williams, Mr. & Mrs. Francis Emmett. Centenary Methodist Church of St. Louis: The First Hundred Years 1839 - 1939. St. Louis: Mound City Press, 1939.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Beginning at the intersection of the north line of Pine Street and the west line of the north-south alley that separates City Blocks 508 and 507, continuing west along said line of Pine Street approximately 237' to its point of intersection with the east line of the north-south alley of City Block 508; thence north along said alley line approximately 190' to its point of intersection with the south line of Olive Street to its point of intersection with the west line of the north-south alley that separates City Blocks 508 and 507; thence southwardly along said alley line approximately 190' to its point of intersection with the point of beginning. The Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, South building occupies the southeast quarter of City Block 508.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

These boundaries are the church's property lines.

CENTENARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH ST. LOUIS (INDEPEDENT CITY), MO

15/743440/4279240

(WEBSTER GROVES)
1961 11 SE

38°37'30"
90°15'

480 000 FEET (ILL.)

1741

1742

40 64

12°30" 1.1 MI. TO 1-76

1744

ICAHG
2961



Produced by the United States Geological Survey

Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

Topography by planetable surveys 1930 and 1933

Revised from aerial photographs taken 1952

Field checked 1954

Projection: Illinois coordinate system, west zone
(transverse Mercator)

10,000-foot grid ticks: Illinois coordinate system, west zone
and Missouri coordinate system, east zone

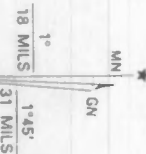
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue
1927 North American Datum (NAD 27)

North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks
The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute
intersections are given in USGS Bulletin 1875

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

UTM GRID AND 1993 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



1°45'

18 MILLS

31 MILLS



SCALE

COMPLIES WITH U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY'S
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER
ILLINOIS GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
AND DIVISION OF GEOL
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAP:

CENTENARY METHODIST-EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH
55 PLAZA ~~SQ~~UARE
ST. LOUIS, MO 63103

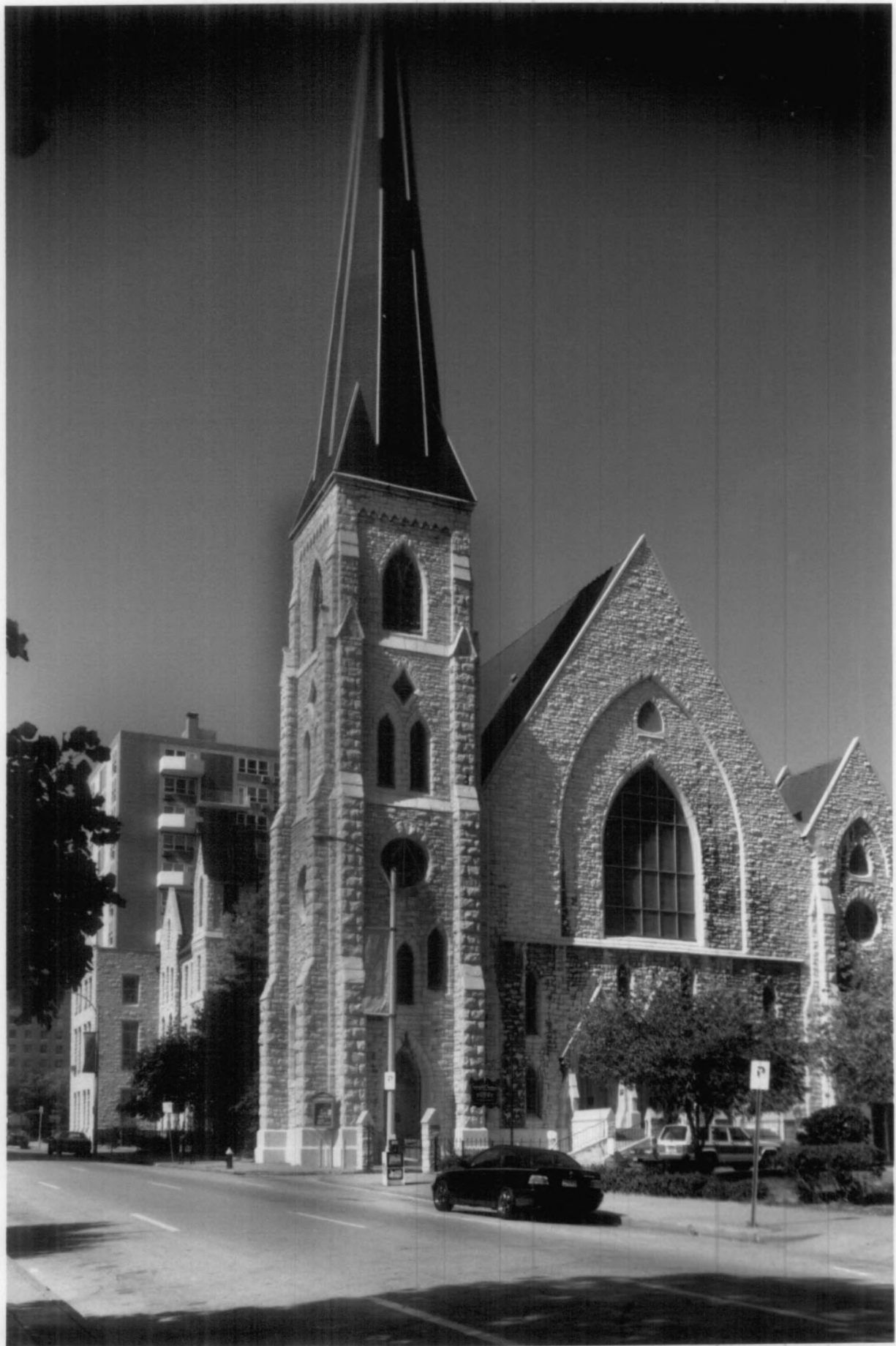
①

PHOTOGRAPHER: CYNTHIA LONGWISCH

10/1996

NEGATIVES: LANDMARKS ASSOCIATION OF ST. LOUIS, ILL

PRIMARY ELEVATION; CAMERA FACING NW



②

CENTENARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH
55 PLAZA SQUARE
ST. LOUIS, MO 63103

PHOTOGRAPHER: CYNTHIA LONGWISCH
10/1996

NEGATIVES - LANDMARKS ASSOC. OF ST. LOUIS, MO.
S. SIDE ELEVATION; CAMERA FACING NW



5

CENTENARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH

55 PLAZA SQUARE

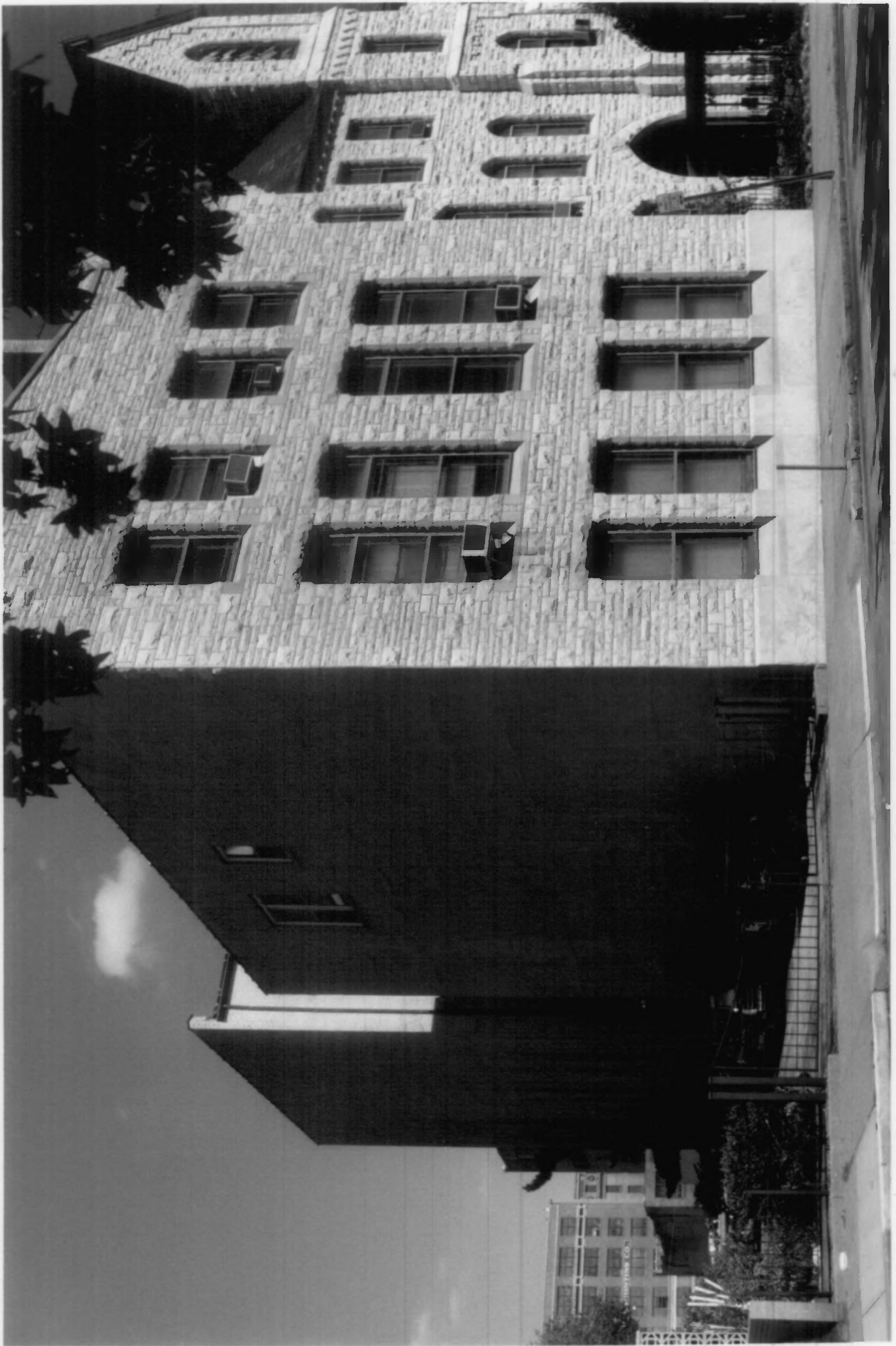
ST. LOUIS, MO 63103

PHOTOGRAPHER: CYNTHIA LONGWISCH

10/1996

NEGATIVE: LANDMARKS ASSOCIATION OF ST. LOUIS

REAR (WEST) & S. SIDE ELEVATIONS; CAMERA
FACING NE



4

CENTENARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH
55 PLAZA SQUARE
ST. LOUIS, MO 63103

PHOTOGRAPHER: CYNTHIA LONGWISCH
10/1996

LEGEND: LANDMARKS ASSOCIATION OF ST. LOUIS, MO.
N. SIDE ELEVATION; CAMERA FACING SW



Centenary Methodist
St. Louis

detail, primary (east) elev.

41601

Centenary Methodist
St. Louis

North elev.

facing SE

41601

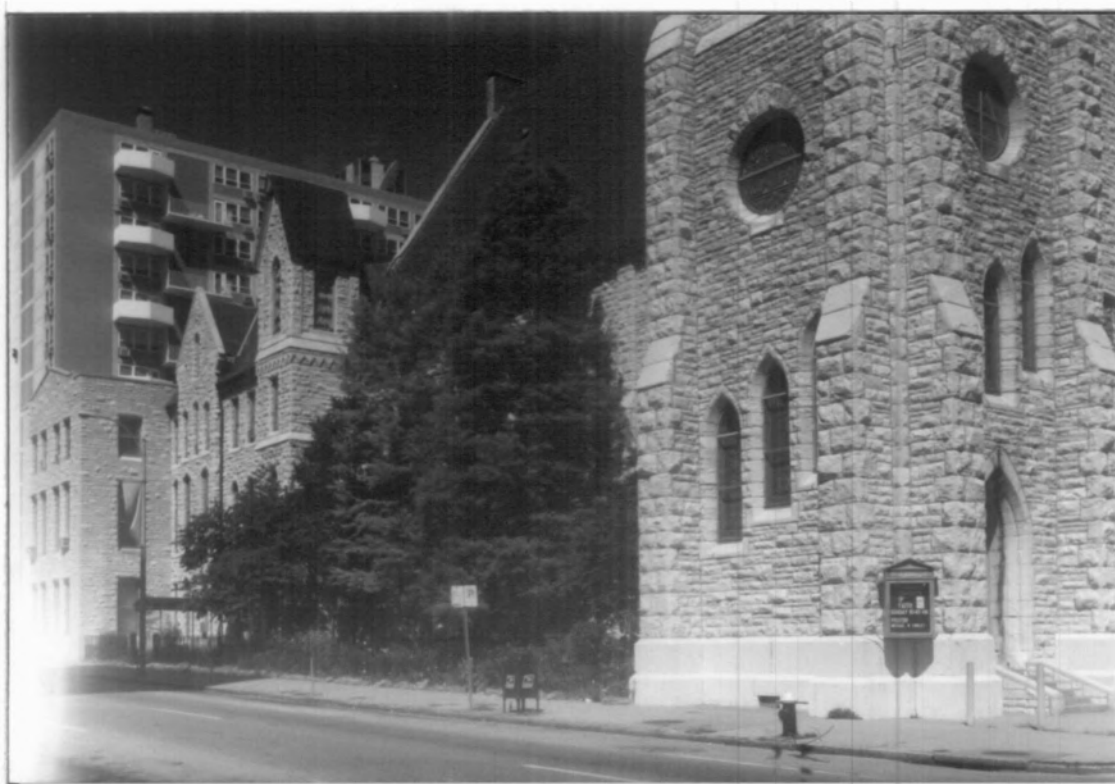


Centenary Methodist
St. Louis
South elev.
facing NW

41600

Centenary Methodist
St. Louis
North elev.
facing SE

41601



Centenary Methodist
St Louis
South elevation
Facing NE

41601

Centenary Methodist
St. Louis
primary (east) elev.

41601

